Shelter-in-Place

Shelter-in-Place questions & answers

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Does Shelter-in-Place really work?

Yes it does. Shelter-in-Place has been shown to be a safe response to a hazardous material release of three hours or less. In fact, during the 1992 Gulf War, Israeli citizens used Shelter-in-Place techniques to protect themselves against the threat of chemical weapons carried by Sadam Hussein's SCUD missiles.

Houses built for winter conditions are especially suited for Shelter-in-Place. For the most part, they are tightly constructed and provide a good protective barrier against airborne chemicals.

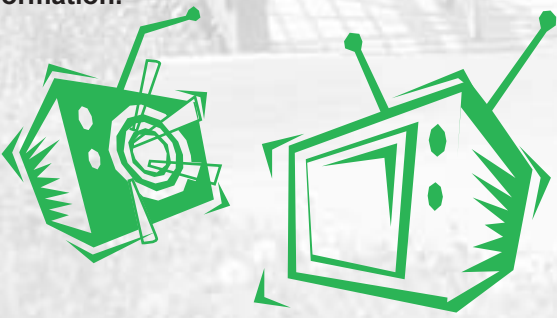
Shelter-in-Place techniques are also effective because they are easily and quickly accomplished. In a matter of moments, you can be safe inside your pre-selected room should a chemical emergency occur in your area.

Is Shelter-in-Place something new?

No, sheltering in place has been used by emergency management officials for many years. It was actually developed by fire departments as a way for the public to protect themselves during a chemical release until help arrives.

When should I Shelter-in-Place?

If you hear the Shelter-in-Place instruction on the radio or TV, or if you hear a siren sound, such as heard in the video, for an extended period of time (more than 3 minutes), go inside and turn on your radio to find out what you should do. Or, if you smell a strong or unusual odor and you don't know where it's coming from, go inside and begin Shelter-in-Place procedures while you listen to the radio for information.



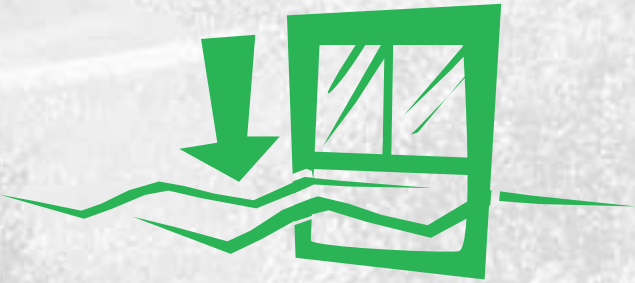
What about Children at School?

While it is only natural to want to go get your children from school in the event of an emergency, attempting to do so during a chemical emergency could just make matters worse. You and your children could experience exposure to a much greater chemical hazard while traveling to or from school.

The local schools are developing Shelter-in-Place procedures. These are designed to ensure that your children would be safe at school during a chemical emergency. As a parent you should talk with school leaders and gain as much understanding of these Shelter-in-Place procedures as possible.

Is Shelter-in-Place suited for an ammonia release?

Ammonia has a strong affinity to water and will react with the moisture in our bodies. Ammonia gas can be extremely irritating to the eyes, airways and skin due to its alkaline nature. Shelter-in-Place can protect you from high levels of ammonia until the chemical can be dispersed by the winds.



Why not just evacuate?

In some cases, evacuation is the better thing to do. However, evacuation could increase your chances of being exposed to the airborne chemical hazard. Evacuation is also more time consuming, especially with our limited road systems. The decision to evacuate or Shelter-in-Place will be made by local emergency authorities.

What should you do if you are told to Shelter-in-Place in a hazardous materials emergency?

- ☐ Go inside a building. Listen to TV or radio for information.
- ☐ Close all doors and windows. Seal with duct tape or wet cloths.
- ☐ **TURN OFF** air conditioners, furnaces and fans.
- ☐ **DO NOT USE** fireplaces. Extinguish fire. Close damper.

If you are told to Evacuate in a hazardous materials emergency:

- ☐ Gather a change of clothing, baby needs, medicine and/or dietary needs.
- ☐ Keep car vents and windows closed. **DO NOT** use vehicle air conditioner or heater.

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